

Lake County News Sun Editorial, February 27, 2008

You know it's a tough winter when the governor declares your county a disaster area after we were hit earlier this month by record snowfalls. Congressman Mark Kirk and Congresswoman Melissa Bean agree it's been a hard winter, along with our two senators, who are pushing the Bush administration to free up federal funds. At stake is money to help Lake County communities pay their snow removal costs this winter and specifically during the Feb. 5 and Feb. 6 snowstorm which dumped between a foot and 19 inches here. If the federal government grants Gov. Rod Blagojevich's request, the county could recover 75 percent of cleanup costs. That's a lot of overtime to take off the books and money to pay for dwindling supplies of salt.

Blagojevich says the finances of many local governments are "stretched dangerously thin" because they've had to grapple with the particularly harsh weather this winter. Well, most of are psyches are being "stretched dangerously thin." Mental health days have been when the sun shines, which hasn't been too frequent. And, winter doesn't end until March 20.

Falling snow, melting snow, freezing snow. The triumvirate of this winter of weather woes.

We hate to stroke our gray beards, but we can't remember a winter this bad since the February we walked to school uphill both ways. This winter has seen police patrolling streets in snowmobiles, like they have in Gurnee and Mundelein. That's got to be a first in a while. Because there has been so much snow and ice, we've seen communities, like Gurnee, running out of salt.

So far, the region's official weather reporting station, Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, has seen more than 50 inches since the beginning of December. Not only is that about 15 inches above normal, but this is the first winter since 1978-79 (aka "The Year of the Blizzard") the area has seen more than 50 inches of snow, according to meteorologists. We have had more, much more in Lake County.

And we're not alone. In Boston, 49.6 inches of snow has fallen this winter, 19.3 inches more than normal. In Madison, Wis., where it never snowed more than 76.6 inches before, the city

already saw 77 inches by Feb. 12. Just last week, Grand Rapids, Mich., shattered its December-February snowfall record of 85.1 inches set in 1951-52.

How to combat this continuing winter bout? Have the feds send money, more money, much money for snowfighting funds. Also, remember, baseball's spring training is under way in warmer climes. Oh, joy.